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AUTHOR Klassen, Cecil
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ABSTRACT

A Toronto (Canada) study explored how low levels of schooling and literacy affected access of Latin-American adults to aspects of everyday life. Subjects were nine Spanish-speaking men and women, most with little or no formal schooling and varying levels of Spanish literacy. Analysis of data gathered in interviews revealed that the individuals managed to operate effectively in most commonly-encountered domains (home, streets, shops, offices, less-desirable work settings) and ineffectively in some others (desirable work settings, classrooms, church). Literacy management strategies used effectively include the following: finding helpers to act as scribes for reading and writing in Spanish and English, and occasionally to speak in English; using limited forms of literacy such as simple numeracy skills, slashes or other marks on paper, using individual letters of the alphabet rather than words, and recognizing logos; and learning by experimenting with behaviors and products. Obstacles to learning cited include a lack of various kinds of knowledge obtained simply as a result of going to school (e.g., dictionary use, understanding of grammatical concepts); forms of exclusion from or within the classroom. Feelings of inadequacy and great desire to succeed also emerged. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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OBSTACLES TO LEARNING:
THE ACCOUNT OF LOW-EDUCATION LATIN AMERICAN ADULTS

(to appear in a forthcoming book on student access to ESL training in Canada, currently being edited by Barbara Burnaby and Alister Cummings, OISE, University of Toronto)

by Cecil Klassen
March, 1991

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by Cecil Klassen

INTRODUCTION

The issue of access in education for adults is not only about access to classrooms but also about access to all domains of life to which various forms of learning and education open doors. In a study I conducted in Toronto (Klassen, 1987), I explored how low levels of schooling and literacy affected the access that low-education Latin American adults have to the various contexts of Toronto which they encounter in their everyday life. I pursued three access-related issues:

1) accessible and inaccessible domains, or the extent to which my informants could or could not manage the literacy demands in the various domains of their everyday lives;

2) obstacles to access, or what keeps low-education individuals from participating as they would like to in difficult-to-manage domains;

3) beliefs and feelings about access, or what Brian Street (1984) refers to as the ideological side of literacy. This third issue reveals an important and often overlooked aspect of access which involves profound personal and cultural dimensions to exclusion.

What follows is a discussion of each of these issues in relation to the primary theme which emerged from the data I collected--learning.

QUALITATIVE APPROACH

I used an ethnographic interview methodology. The large volume of narrative data that is generated using this methodology makes it feasible to deal with only a small number of informants. The result is that this study provides a reasonably accurate description of a small group of people, but this description cannot be reliably generalized to other Latin American immigrant contexts in other cities let alone to other cultural groups. The study therefore serves primarily as a case study.

I interviewed, in Spanish, nine individuals, four men and five women, five of whom had had virtually no formal schooling in their home country. Four of the nine had learned (some, out of school) to read and write in their home countries sufficiently to read and write Spanish for of their everyday literacy purposes. Three of the women had had no schooling whatsoever and had had virtually no literacy skills in Spanish until they started to come to a literacy class where I met them. I interviewed these three at more length than the others; consequently, the names María, Rebeca, and Doña Lucía (not their real names) appear more frequently in this discussion than other names.

OVERVIEW OF DOMAINS and LITERACY MANAGING PRACTICES

The theoretical framework of the study comes from the field of literacy studies. The theory is primarily sociolinguistic in its concern with language functions and uses. The notion that different contexts give rise to different forms and uses of literacy has become one of the important insights in literacy theory in recent years (Scribner and Cole, 1981; Street, 1984;

Levine, 1986). "Different contexts" can be interpreted broadly to mean that different cultures and peoples have each developed their own forms of, uses for, and understandings about literacy, which suggests that literacy is not simply a set of technical skills that transfer easily between cultures. A specifically Latin American ideology of literacy, for example, became apparent in the data, an ideology which differs in certain respects from the Canadian ideology of literacy. The term "different contexts," however, can also be interpreted more narrowly to mean that, even within the same culture, literacy is used differently in the different routine settings of everyday life. So, for example, the set of skills necessary for managing the literacy requirements of a bank context are somewhat different from those skills required for participating successfully in classroom contexts. To distinguish in this study between the broader cultural contexts and more specific everyday locations of literacy use, I borrowed the term "domain" from Wagner, Messick, and Spratt (1986) to refer to the specific locations. Each "domain" is a location of everyday life which contains its own kinds of print material, and in which that written material is used.

Also necessary to the description of a given domain are the kinds of "literacy acts" which individuals perform in that domain in order to use written language in some way. What follows, then, is a summary of the domains and literacy managing strategies which I found described in the interview data. The

table below gives an overview of this data.

LITERACY DOMAINS	LITERACY MANAGING PRACTICES		LANGUAGE
DOMAINS:			
-home -city streets -shops -offices -immigration -doctor -school -bank, etc. -work -undesirable	managing strategies effective	-scribes -limited codes -memory -experimenting	Spanish (some English)
-desirable -classroom -ESL -Training programs	managing strategies ineffective		English
-church			Spanish

- Manageable Domains

The table indicates that the individuals I interviewed manage to effectively operate in the majority of the domains they enter on a regular basis. As the majority of those I interviewed often said, me defiendo, which means literally, "I can defend myself", or more precisely, "I'm managing, thank you." It was clear that even the most non-literate person in my sample (María, who could not identify most letters of the Spanish alphabet let alone suggest what sound any of the letters made) effectively managed by using a set of literacy-use strategies.

The degree of participation which such strategies allow is not simple entry to those domains; rather participation involves, for many practical purposes, effective management of

literacy in those domains. Three of the more interesting strategies are finding helpers (scribes), using very limited forms of literacy, and experimenting. It is useful to notice how these strategies operate to provide access to many domains.

The first strategy requires finding helpers who will act as scribes to do the reading and writing in Spanish and in English (and occasionally to speak English) when such needs arise. It requires developing a network of trustworthy friends, civil servants, and clerks, who will understand what is needed without embarrassing the person seeking help. Most of my informants, for example, described how they have gotten to know certain Spanish speaking tellers in the banks they use. Angela told me that people in her bank knew her, and that "they fill out the forms for me. They help, and all I do is sign." Letter writing, an exclusively Spanish language literacy need, is another example. María, Rebeca, and Doña Ana described how they engaged in regular and extensive correspondence with friends and relations back home by having letters written and read for them.

The second strategy, using limited forms of literacy, is an alternative to depending on scribes all of the time and allows a fair degree of autonomy. It involves using simple numeracy skills, slashes or other marks on paper, and using individual alphabet letters (rather than entire words) and recognizing logos. María, for example, in order to remember doctors' appointments for her children, would roughly "draw" a prominent letter from an appointment card onto a calendar (with her husband

helping her to remember which day it was on the calendar) and then match the letter to the card for the place she needed to go on any particular day. Doña Ana, María, and Rebeca all used bus numbers and one or two of the first letters from a bus' name to recognize which buses to take. They each carried little notebooks with bus numbers and friends' phone numbers and addresses marked down. They would occasionally have to ask family members or friends to help them distinguish between all that was marked down, or to rewrite what was important out of the notebooks. Another kind of limited literacy skill which my informants described using is paper management. It involves the ability to effectively recognize and deal with various bills, forms, and documents appropriately without being able to read those materials. The women in the study, even when they had schooled children or husbands, all managed their household and family business, such as immigration, medical appointments, paying of bills, and banking details, by presenting correct documents, prescriptions, appointment cards and so forth to the correct clerk, secretary, or receptionist.

A third strategy, which I will only mention briefly, is learning by experimenting. As Pedro explained to me, "Sometimes one has to ask for help. But, as I've been telling you, one has to keep trying until one learns one's self.... By making mistakes, you learn." This strategy would involve, for example, experimenting with new products and recipes and then remembering what one likes, or trying a new route on the bus or subway,

getting lost, retracing one's steps and then remembering how to go the next time, or trying an unknown product from a store as a way of developing a repertoire of what are good and bad buys.

One final observation about the strategies should be made. I discovered that the strategies operate primarily in Spanish. English, although it would be useful, proved not to be necessary in many of the domains.

- Difficult Domains

My informants, however, also described how difficult it was to take part in, or even to enter, certain other domains. As the table above indicates, these domains include ESL classrooms, training, desirable work, and church. What the table does not show are the ways in which these difficult domains are linked. The underlying theme which links them is a sense my informants frequently voiced about their inability to access learning opportunities. Whether it was personal and spiritual growth at church or English proficiency and job training, learning was not accessible for a variety of reasons. And the problem created a interlinked series of closed doors starting from a personal lack of schooling. Lack of schooling was seen as the primary reason for inability to benefit from ESL classes, which was the reason for lack of access to training programs and desirable work, and ultimately to lack of access to fuller participation in both one's own Latin American circles and to the broader Canadian society. What follows is a more detailed description of how my informants described their inability to learn.

LEARNING OBSTACLES

-Basic Literacy Blocks

The informants who lacked even basic literacy skills described their lack of simple coding and decoding skills as obstacles to learning in ESL classes. María, for example, told me that, although she learned a few new words of vocabulary, her experience of going to ESL classes merely involved copying letters and words she couldn't understand while she either worried about family problems or struggled to stay awake. When I asked her to describe the kinds of written materials she encountered in the ESL class, she commented,

> I wouldn't be able to describe what the teacher writes for the students to read--because I can't read and I don't understand what it is. For example, today I copied from the blackboard, but I don't know what it says. I copied it for writing practice, that's all. But I don't know what [it was] . . . because I still can't tell what all of the letters are.

As a result, she told me, "me quedo igual," (literally, "I remain the same," which means, "I might as well not be there for all the good it does me.") Similarly, Rebeca described and showed me English exercises she finally could copy in a rough print she had been learning from friends at home, but she could read almost nothing of what she had so painstakingly copied. The benefit, therefore, for her was not practice with the grammar and vocabulary on the page, but simply forming the letters; and this "copying" she could do only if everything was printed. Anything in cursive script was beyond even her copying ability. And the only reason she could now copy in block print to some degree was

because Spanish speaking friends she had made in ESL classes were tutoring her in their homes in Spanish reading and writing. Clearly, her use of the strategy of finding helpers was working in a very limited way as she found friends who helped her learn a bit of basic Spanish literacy outside of the class.

Doña Ana had also started to learn how to print in Spanish from friends she had made in her ESl classes. She gave me an example of how her inability to read and write kept her from learning English. She told me that sometimes she would go to a library to listen to English language records because she had heard that she could learn some English that way. However, she found that, unlike the others who go and learn English this way, she cannot remember anything:

> They sit here. You would seat yourself here, put on your record, and then start to study, to note down what you are hearing. I can't do that. It's that nothing stays with me. I just sit and listen. All the others write what they're hearing. I write nothing. I just hear it, and nothing stays.

The majority of my informants commented on the usefulness, not of simply knowing how to read and write, but of knowing how to read and write in Spanish in order to learn English. There were two reasons given for why knowing Spanish literacy is beneficial for learning English at this basic coding and decoding level. One level is the simple use of translation for remembering new words. Rebeca often told me that she wishes she could write down the Spanish word below the English words to help her remember the meanings the way she sees schooled ESL students use their mother tongues to benefit from new English vocabulary as it comes up in

class. She gave me an example of a Colombian girl in her basic beginner class who "works like a machine copying everything." The Colombian girl always wanted to know the meanings of the words so that she could copy the Spanish translation below. Rebeca told me, "Those who know can write--like, above it's in English and below, at the end of the word, they write it in Spanish ."

A second reason to learn to read and write in Spanish first is that the Spanish alphabet is a much easier code to learn than the English alphabet both because Latin Americans already know Spanish and because the Spanish alphabet's sound-symbol correspondence is much less complicated to learn than the complex spelling system in English. In addition, María pointed out to me several times, literate Latin Americans can read English writing that they see by using Spanish reading skills. Even if their pronunciation is not correct, they can successfully recognize and come to decode in Spanish many English words because the same alphabet is being used. Rebeca told me that schooled Latin Americans in her ESL class "can read your language, but they don't know what it says," so all they need is for someone to give them the Spanish translations. The basic code, therefore, is largely already in place for schooled Latin Americans. But the non-educated, my informants indicated, are kept from learning because they do not have the mother-tongue tools for accessing and remembering English. This handicap is true not only in the classroom but also in terms of having the ability to access

learning at home. As Rebeca said, when schooled people get home, they can study. María made a similar remark about the link between the ability to read Spanish and the ability to study:

> ....knowing how to read, I'd be able to follow the letters in a dictionary, study, take a few minutes aside to study with it. But because I can't, I don't have even the desire to sit down and try it, because I can't. And I remain the same as before--no difference.

- Lack of Schooled Knowledge

But the basic inability to access the written code (whether print or cursive script) is not the only kind of skill which my informants claimed they lacked. What they lacked in the ESL classroom, they indicated, was not just the ability to read and write in their own language, but also various kinds of knowledge that one acquires as a result of going to school. This feeling of lacking the knowledge needed to benefit from the classroom context is clearly reflected in the choice of words the majority of my informants made to describe themselves in relation to people who are educated. They regularly referred to educated or schooled people as "los gue saben" (those who know). This use of terminology contains the implicit understanding that non-schooled people do not know, or do not have the kinds of knowledge one gains from being schooled.

The ability to use dictionaries effectively and to understand grammar explanations are two examples that some of my informants gave me of school knowledge they lacked. Pedro, for example, told me that dictionaries are of little use to him even though he has learned to read Spanish at a basic level. One

reason is because he does not know the order of the alphabet, something he would have learned in school. He explained that, even though he has not learned alphabetic order, he can still sometimes find a word in a Spanish/English dictionary by simply skimming through the dictionary until he finds the first letter, and then he starts to skim for the second, and so forth. But then he emphasized that even finding the word is frequently of no use to him because, he said, "I don't know Spanish." When I disagreed with him because Spanish is his mother-tongue, he explained two ways in which he did not know Spanish. First, he said, the words he tried to look up were often <u>modismos</u> (idioms) from rural dialect and therefore they do not appear in dictionaries of standard Spanish. Second, he said that he never knows which form of a word will likely be in the dictionary so he can spend a long time looking for a form of a word which does not even appear in the dictionary:

> The problem is that in Spanish I can't find a word because I don't understand what is the root of the word--the head--of the verb. I make mistakes, no? I can't find them. I find something that isn't the verb.

As a consequence of this perceived lack of schooled knowledge, several of my informants whom I also tutored asked me to teach them Spanish, by which I came to understand they meant "grammar" in Spanish because part of their experience in the ESL class was complete lack of comprehension whenever grammar talk occurred. At the same time, they frequently observed students who had had home country schooling quickly grasp grammatical explanations and instructions and then do written work, while the non-schooled

students were left with little to do but copy words meaningless words.

Angela's explanation for why she stopped attending ESL classes introduced yet another kind of schooled knowledge which is needed for successful participation in the ESL classroom environment. She quit going to ESL classes because the teacher asked Angela to talk about things she didn't know anything about. What these non-and semi-schooled individuals identified, then, was that they did not know what a "schooled" person knows, such as metalinguistic knowledge (grammar, word roots, conventions of dictionary organization), standard Spanish vocabulary (or the ability to distinguish between dialect words and standard words), and the ability to display certain kinds of schooled knowledge.

- Exclusion from Learning

Lack of access to learning, however, was not only a matter of personal inability to use the written code or a lack of schooled knowledge. My informants also identified a number of what they saw as obstacles to, or forms of exclusion from the classroom itself. Doña Lucía, for example, angrily described being isolated from the other students so that she could practice copying while everyone else learned English in a group. Doña Ana, after telling me that nothing stayed in her head when she went to ESL classes, said,

> The teacher told me I couldn't attend. She said, 'You're going to have to learn Spanish first, because you can't be in this school.' So I said, 'Okay, teacher, but what should I do then?" She told me something about a Spanish school somewhere. I didn't go back.

Rebeca described a somewhat different kind of experience when she was screened out of higher level ESL courses:

> They had me in a higher level courses--in the third level--but only because I understand [English]. But later they returned me to the same level, number one, because I can't write or read. I just understand [English].

As a result, Rebeca said that because she already knew most of the English that was taught in the first level, she spent class time tutoring the new Latin American students who came into the lower levels and helped the schooled ones get more quickly into the higher levels.

LACK OF SCHOOLING AND EXCLUSION FROM OTHER DOMAINS

The lack of schooling, which results in an inability to successfully access formal learning, is also seen to result in a lack of access to a number of other domains. The majority of my informants described their problems with gaining access to "desirable work" as being rooted in their inability to gain access to learning because of lack of schooling. The formula for access to "desirable work" which my informants understood to be necessary in Toronto involves primarily successfully gaining entry to "training programs" for specific trades. But entry to training programs depends on passing successfully through the prerequisite ESL courses. Yet success at progressing through to the higher levels of the ESL system, as described above, is seen to depend largely on first-language schooling and literacy.

Pedro, for example, told me why he thought he and his brother had not yet been allowed into training programs, "One

[reason they don't permit us] is that we don't know English, and another is that we have no education even in our own language." Similarly, María explained that she needed to find almost any kind of work in order to support the family so that her husband could be free to learn English in order to get into the training courses. She believed that her husband, because he, unlike her, was schooled (a grade six education in Guatemala), had a much better chance to progress through the ESL system if only he could be freed from all other encumbrances so that he could study. And if he can't, then the children must be given the opportunity to get the educations which will ensure access to good jobs for later generations.

It is interesting to note, however, that my informants all talked about themselves as capable workers. Unlike in other areas of their lives where they doubted their effectiveness, as will be described in more detail below, in the area of work performance they displayed a sense of confidence in their abilities as good workers. They all told me about having had to work since they were children, and watching other children go to school while they had to go to work. A number of them expressed dismay that their work experience was often not accepted as legitimate proof of their abilities to perform jobs. Angela had run a series of successful businesses in Ecuador, had taken a leading role in opening a new city produce market in the largest city of her country, and had served on the executive of that market for many years, and had operated her own restaurant, all

with only a grade two education. Yet in Canada the only job she could get was cooks' helper in a cafeteria. Similarly, María had successfully run her own meatcutting business in Guatemala, and was confident, given a sympathetic employer, she could cut meat here in Canada, and maybe even open a bakery if given the chance. The "workplace" obstacle, therefore, is not ability to perform work, but instead it is access to the English and training which provide "entry" to desirable forms of employment.

The second kind of strongly felt exclusion which lack of schooling causes is an inability to take part in the schooling of one's children. María and Angela related how happy they were to have their pre-school children and grandchildren ask them to look at a picture book with them or to watch the older children try to sound out the letters in school books or toy sales advertisements in newspapers.

But exclusion from, rather than participation in, their children's learning was the more prevalent theme which continued to come up in the interviews. Angela said she noticed that her children often read novels, but she never knew what those novels were about. Rebeca and María, who presently have children in the school system, describe their frustration monitoring their children's work. María told me:

> I don't know what they write because I don't know how to read .... And that problem I've always had with them [the children]. They would come with their assignment and I would ask, "Did you do your assignment?" "Yes, here it is." But after a while I started to realize that they were showing me last week's assignments. They lied to me like that because they knew I couldn't tell the difference.

Similarly, Rebeca described trying to get her children to do their homework, sitting with them feeling unable to help them when they needed help and not knowing if what they showed her was done when they wanted to return to their playing. What emerged clearly in these comments and others were feelings of shame and their desire to participate in the learning of their children.

IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF LITERACY

The analysis above of the more descriptive information of the different locations, the written material found in those contexts, and the ways people behave in those domains to manage or deal with the literacy they encounter, reveals only part of the issue of access. As I briefly mentioned earlier, the place of literacy in the lives of people also involves the ideological side of literacy, and it includes values, beliefs, and understandings about the place of literacy and schooling in their lives. I explored two aspects to this ideological level of literacy in my informants' lives. One side, the positive side, is revealed in the uses, or "powers," each individual attributed to schooling and to reading and writing abilities; the other side, the negative, is revealed in how my informants described themselves in relation to what a literate and schooled person can do. The chart below outlines these two sides:

FUNCTIONS OF LITERACY
(perceptions, values, purposes)

POSITIVE:	NEGATIVE:
USES, POWERS OF LITERACY:	SELF-DEFINITION:
-managing everyday tasks -being informed -communicating	-inadequate
-learning (heuristic power)	-excluded
-having culture, civilization	

The following list provides more detail to demonstrate the kinds of specific uses that are categorized in the table above.

-managing everyday tasks (bills, lists, buses, menus, instructions)
-being informed (direct access to information about sales, news, children's progress at school)
-communicating (letters to relatives, notes to family members, notes to shop keepers/teachers)
-learning (English, training programs, personal growth)
-showing one's culture (schooled ways of knowing and being)

It is clear that many of these uses for reading and writing which my informants identified include much of what even the least literate, schooled, or bilingual in my sample described doing relatively effectively already.

Although the table does not clearly show it, the interview data contained a persistent theme of an immense desire for schooling and literacy, especially schooling and literacy in Spanish. It was clear from the interviews that my informants all strongly believe that Spanish schooling, and the resulting access to English, would dramatically change their ability to manage most contexts in Toronto. What this reveals is that my informants do not like the way they participate in most domains.

They feel inadequate, a feeling which contradicts their effective management of many domains.

Inadequacy was often described in terms of inefficiency. Pedro, for example, sees himself as operating inefficiently when his experimenting with food results in wastage because a bad choice of canned food would mean having to throw things away. Similarly, Rebeca spoke often about her desire to be more literate in Spanish in order to correspond with her relatives in Central America. She said, "Imagine, to read a paper, a letter, one says, 'Ah,' and one is informed immediately. [But] if a friend isn't in, you have to wait... It's a painful thing, that you want to know [what is in the letter]." Her frustration with what she saw as her inadequate strategies for managing print was very clear in other situations as well. In the same interview in which she told me that shopping was no problem for her she told me,

> I can read the prices [but] I can't read what's written there in English.... [For example], I know which is beef and I recognize [by sight] all of [the kinds of meat]. But notice, it takes more effort for someone who doesn't know than for one who knows because the person who knows can go directly to read the names, but the one who doesn't know must go through more.

This demonstrates that recognizing kinds of meat by sight was, in her mind, an inefficient way for getting information on what her choices were in front of a meat counter.

Perhaps more significant, however, than feelings of inefficiency is the strong sense of how the strategies they use are also inappropriate. The strong feelings my informants

expressed revealed more than just a sense of limitation and inefficiency. It became clear from what they told me that they felt embarrassed about how they were forced to deal with written language. They perceive the strategies they have come to rely on negatively--a social nuisance which leads to embarrassing dependency. In one interview, when Rebeca was describing how she had to ask the nurse to fill in forms for her, she said, "It was a thing that made me cry. It was something terrible [having to embarrass myself by asking]." It was in such contexts that my informants often used the expression me cuesta which suggests personal embarrassment and cost. They see their strategies as inefficient, keeping them from more control of the details of their lives, and requiring effort or personal cost that literates, they think, do not experience.

This sense of inadequacy which pervades their lives is revealed even more strongly perhaps in strong statements which were made about exclusion from culture and civilization. This sense of cultural exclusion as a result of lack of schooling is implicit and therefore rather difficult to define or describe. Yet it is central to my informants' talk about who they are and what their lack of schooling means to them as individuals. These feelings of cultural exclusion extend beyond specific domains to less tangible but more all encompassing perceptions of inferiority.

The sense of exclusion which emerged from the interviews often included an implicit link between schooling and status or

culture. Rebeca, for example, suggests this sense of exclusion in the way she describes the difference between herself and those "who know." At church, for example, she felt not simply restricted from participating because of her inability to read the books and hymnals that everybody else used to participate in the services; she also felt censure from the educated Latin Americans at the church. One reason she stopped going to some Bible studies she enjoyed attending was because one of the educated women always found reason to criticize Rebeca and another non-literate friend who always sat together. She commented, "I would hear that all people are equal. But I would say to myself, 'No, we're not all equal because I'm not equal to those who know.'" She extended this same issue of equality to the classroom when she commented,

> But the teachers treat everyone alike--the ones who know with the ones who don't know. And that's what one feels badly about because it's not like that. So one says, 'How can this teacher think that I'm going to understand if she is a person who has studied for many years but I have never studied?' I couldn't understand like everyone else because I didn't know many of the letters. I'm not the same as a person who has studied before.

This sense of inferiority appears again, for example, in descriptions which Pedro, Juan, and Doña Ana gave about the practice in Latin America of having non-literates use their thumbprints in place of a signature on any official document. Doña Ana, in a very rare expression of strong displeasure, said she always insisted that someone else sign for her "in order not to have to put down my fingers--I couldn't stand having to put down my fingers on the paper--so others would sign for me.... It

looked very bad to have to put your fingers down there."

Such statements reveal cultural meanings attached to written language which extend to distinctions, not only between the schooled and the non-schooled, but also between urban and rural, upper class and lower class, civilized and backward, Spanish and Indian. Another example of this same theme is the perception most of my informants had that the Spanish they spoke was not real Spanish, an implicit reflection of their lack of culture. The embarrassment of not speaking correct Spanish was particularly acute for those whose children make fun of them. The feelings described earlier of shame before one's children clearly illustrate this form of exclusion. Deception about homework is a mild form of the lack of regard which the mothers suggested their children often had for them because of the mothers' lack of education. Rebeca told me of her anger (me da rabia) and frustration at the way her children would bait her about talking like an Indian and about coming from the mountains. María began to cry in one literacy class when she started to talk about the way her kids compared her to an Indian because of her lack of schooling and substandard Spanish.

A similar theme came up in comments made by Doña Ana and Angela in relation to how they had learned, largely from their children, how to speak and behave in a cultured manner, and to associate with educated people. Doña Ana suggested that she managed to get along well in the cities partly because:

> I would be careful--and I would copy from the people who knew how to conduct themselves better than I did, and not

> copy from those who knew nothing. From those who know, because you can't learn from those who don't know. Everything you now observe me doing in the way I conduct myself comes from the way I have copied from the people who know. And later, I had that daughter of mine who has kept correcting me .... She says, "Mother, that's not how you say it," and I say, "You're right, daughter."... And she would correct me. So I watch the people who are educated, and I do the same.

Such statements reveal strong associations the people in my sample made between literacy, schooling and being civilized.

CONCLUSION

The issue of access in adult education, then, as it relates to low-education Spanish-speaking adults in this case study, does not stem from inability to function or to take part in the various domains of everyday life. The informants even with no previous schooling and virtually no literay skills in Spanish managed most aspects of their lives quite effectively in all but a few of the domains they routinely inhabit. Ironically, the domain (ESL) which should give access to desired but inaccessible domains is itself not manageable. And although desirable employment is included in these excluded domains, it is by no means the only or the primary domain which is experienced as inaccessible. Rather, what is felt particularly strongly is exclusion from family and peer esteem, culture, and status, all of which is traced back, not primarily to ESL problems, but to lack of Spanish schooling.

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